

THE OREGONIAN'S READERS ON THE ISSUES

MEASURE 50

Health care plan has readers smoking

Measure 50 proves all over again that Salem lacks the backbone to tackle Oregon's difficult needs head-on. Health care for all is a real problem, so I can fully understand why legislators elected to start with the children of Oregon in the wording of Measure 50.

However, Big Tobacco can save its collective resources because I hereby predict that Measure 50 will pass by a ratio of 2-to-1.

How do I know? Because Oregonians have always been willing to saddle some minority with the burden of financing elements of state government when those funds should come out of the general fund.

In her Sept. 4 front-page story, "Tobacco ready to snuff tax with cash," Janie Har points out that Oregonians have a "stingy take on general taxes, but they have approved higher tobacco prices twice in the past 11 years." She notes that smokers in Oregon are a small (and getting smaller) minority.

Oregon needs total tax reform and Salem needs to take the lead. The income tax gives me no incentive to earn more or even save more. With a property tax, I will never truly own my home. A fixed sales tax could be the "third leg" of Oregon's tax plan — the one that the rich cannot escape.

J. LARRY GRANT

Hillsboro

So here we go again with the vote for more taxes to supposedly support children.

You don't see the Legislature trying to raise taxes on alcohol or items like toilet paper because legislators know it would not pass. Why? Because it would cost the majority of people more in taxes and they would vote it down.

Discriminating against a few people to support others' children is wrong. When are parents going to take on the full responsibility for the children they chose to bring into this world? You decided to have the children, so step up and pay up.

Maybe Oregon should be the first state to put into place a one-child law like China has. Or instead of having an extra child tax credit, give that to the people who don't have kids, since their impact on infrastructure and society is far less.

But no, it is easier to discriminate against a few for the indiscriminate judgment of many.

I am a smoker, and I pay property taxes, and I am sure I am not the only one who is tired of continuously having to support the decisions of others who chose to place an extra burden on society by having children they are not prepared to fully care for.

DANIEL ARTHUR

St. Helens

Why don't R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. and other big tobacco companies put the money they are spending against Measure 50 toward supporting health care for children, thus reducing or eliminating the taxes sought in the first place, and let the voters decide as they will?

I would like to see the facts presented honestly and in plain English, not misrepresented by either side. I don't like to see any one group unfairly taxed and believe that all vices should be taxed equally if this is to happen; but on the other hand, I would like to see the children insured.

Not everyone can afford insurance. I

do not yet know how I will vote on Measure 50. I am (at present) a smoker who has "quit" several times and is trying to do so permanently!

JEANETTA ENGLISH
Milwaukie

As a nonsmoker, I am supportive of the concept of reducing smoking. Measure 50 only does this in the weakest manner.

The tax would be raised by 84.5 cents per pack. Numbers were crunched and it turns out that 84.5 cents is the threshold where revenue starts dropping as "too many" smokers quit.

If Gov. Ted Kulongoski and company really wanted to get smokers to quit, they would raise the tax by a significant amount — probably two or more dollars. I'm sure that Kulongoski's team already knows what that tax number is.

[He should] just come out and admit that all he really wants is a stable, long-term tax to fund a social program. Helping smokers quit is just a ruse.

DOUG WARNEKE
Scappoose

The woman sucked to the butt a cigarette while crossing the street, then — predictably — tossed it behind a parked car. I said, "Ma'am. That butt will go down the storm drain to the Tualatin River, Willamette River and Columbia River, then float into the Pacific Ocean, where the longshore current will lift it onto Oregon's beaches. SOLV volunteers get to stoop and pick up your butt during the Beach Cleanup."

The man on her left walked around behind her, picked up the butt, then put it in an ashtray directly in

front of them.

This woman and cigarette smokers across Oregon stimulate a "yes" vote on Measure 50, to compensate for billions of cigarette butts raining on the Earth.

ZEPHYR THOREAU MOORE
Beaverton

Even as a nonsmoker, I am disturbed by this measure. How dare we put all of the burden for this program on the backs of smokers.

Regardless of who is paying for the anti-Measure 50 ads, I will vote to oppose this measure. It is blatantly unfair to charge one segment of our population for all of the costs of a program that will benefit children all over the state.

LYNN HANNAH
West Linn

SHORT TAKES

TO CONTRIBUTE Submit items of 35 words or less to Opinion editor, The Oregonian, 1320 S.W. Broadway, Portland, OR 97201, or e-mail commentary@news.oregonian.com. Please include your phone number and address, for verification only.

I am sure that Gen. David Petraeus' report to Congress would have been very different if his mission had been to make THIS country more secure.

L.D. Modell
Tigard

Since the conservatives and the Bush administration believe life begins at conception, will they allow taxpayers to start taking the dependent deduction at that point in time also?

Scott Coe
Portland

I miss the long-ago Bush slogan du jour, "As the Iraqis stand up, we'll stand down." All we get now is, "Keep standing there, soldiers. I need more time."

K Allnutt
Forest Grove

Al-Qaida's recent video urging U.S. citizens to convert to Islam proves that bin Laden is as out of touch with the American people as Bush is.

Al Ross
Corvallis

Sen. Larry Craig lives in the wrong state. In Oregon, he could march with the governor in the gay rights parades and help overturn voter-approved constitutional amendments on marriage.

Bobbie Miller
The Dalles

If bin Laden and al-Qaida are in Pakistan, why are we in Iraq?

Peter Susi
Portland

Regarding the article about Mayor Potter in The Oregonian (Sept. 6), "To beard or not to beard" — who cares? It's his fuzzy thinking that most concerns me.

Bob Lance
Hillsboro

Health insurance for all is neither a right nor a privilege; it is an OBLIGATION of society to care for the common good of all, especially those in need.

Claudine Werner
Lake Oswego

TALLY: WEEK OF
SEPT. 7-13, 2007

RECEIVED: 653 letters PUBLISHED: 76 letters

MOST POPULAR TOPIC:

The Iraq war

229 letters

Oppose 208

Support 19

No position 2

"Why are we listening to George W. Bush try to explain away failures in Iraq?" asked Bill Jordens of Beaverton.

"Why are we not asking how \$450 billion-plus and 3,700 American lives is not enough to keep Osama bin Laden from building propaganda tapes six years after 9/11?" And Bink Owen of Walla Walla wrote,

"The debate on the Iraq war, for all the talk on why we remain, how long we should stay and what's the course for tomorrow, seems to overlook the following: (1) It's about the oil, (2) it's about no-bid contracts to help out cronies [at companies such as]

Halliburton, and (3) it's about an incompetent president desperate to elevate his below-lackluster stature somewhat higher than a landfill's vista."

SECOND MOST POPULAR TOPIC:

The Bush administration

33 letters

Cost of war will linger

Americans demand an end to the war because it isn't working. Steps to stopping the war were clearly outlined by the Iraq Study Group.

The public health costs are enormous: 60 percent unemployment in Iraq, 43 percent in abject poverty, 30 percent of electricity needs met, only 30 percent with clean water. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis are dead; there are 4 million or more refugees and less than half the doctors than in 2003.

More than half of children live in chronic fear and 92 percent in battle-torn areas have learning impediments. Our soldiers have battle fatigue, 40 percent have full post-traumatic stress disorder, and traumatic brain injury is present in 60 percent of those surviving explosions. They will require \$20 billion of care and most likely will be forever unemployable.

The real solution is turning over peacekeeping to the United Nations, supporting reconstruction rather than destruction. Set a timetable for withdrawal, and stop building permanent bases. Engage in real dialogue with all regional players, including Syria, Iran and others.

CATHERINE THOMASSON, M.D.

President

Physicians for Social Responsibility

Northeast Portland

Comparing 9/11, Iraq

As we remember the tragedy of 9/11, I wonder how many of us think about the tragedy we created

in Iraq. When you look at both, what happened to us in America on Sept. 11, 2001, pales in comparison to what we have done in and to Iraq.

Not only have we killed and maimed thousands more of our own brave young men and women, but we also have killed or caused to be killed hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis as well as destroyed almost all of their infrastructure.

For what? Oil, revenge? It certainly was not because they were involved in the 9/11 attacks.

Just as we justifiably blame Osama bin Laden for the death and destruction that was 9/11, we can blame President Bush, Vice President Cheney and a supportive U.S. Congress for every American and Iraqi who has died and/or will die in our failed attack on a non-threatening sovereign nation. Will it ever end?

CLARENCE A. WAGNER
King City

Support war on terror

Leonard Pitts ("Six years later, do we still remember?" Sept. 10) seems to feel that Americans have forgotten 9/11. But those of us who support the war on terrorism remember all too well and have stood firmly behind our president.

President Bush has taken the war to the enemy, a war supported by both political parties and that has continued to be funded by the congressional Democratic majority (despite its rhetoric).

Our volunteer soldiers have given great sacrifices. They kill terrorists every day in Iraq and are building

democracy and U.S. military bases in the Middle East, the undisputed source of unprovoked terrorism against us.

Liberals would like nothing more than to hope and pretend that America can be protected by doing nothing and to use the funds instead for the further socialization of the American economy. Maybe it is they who must be reminded of the horrible events of 9/11 — of how our fellow Americans suffered jet-fueled fiery deaths or fatal leaps from a hundred stories high.

Those of us who support the war on terrorism will never forget.

CHRISTOPHER P. LUCIA
Vancouver

Kicker-tax debate

In her letter regarding the tax kicker, Laura Smoyer (Sept. 9) proclaims the money Oregonians receive in their kicker checks is not their money. Last time I checked, the state receives tax revenues from the hard-earned paychecks of Oregon residents. Therefore, it is indeed our money.

If the state collects more in taxes than it needs, the extra money should be given back to the taxpayers. If Smoyer wants to send her kicker back to the state, that is her right to do so. It is, after all, her money.

By the same token, I want my kicker back so I can spend my money the way I feel is best for the needs of my family and my community.

ELIZABETH SPILLMAN
Keizer